



June 23, 2020

For Immediate Release

Today, I came before the Court, along with the Illinois' Innocence Project, to seek an order to vacate the conviction of Nathaniel Onsrud in case 2007 CF 720. Mr. Onsrud was serving a 60-year prison term after he was convicted of murder in 2008.

Mr. Onsrud pled guilty in the death of his 4-month old son in 2008. He was sentenced by now- retired Judge "Casey" Stengel to 60 years in prison. He attempted to withdraw his guilty plea, but his motions were denied. The Illinois' Innocence Project took Mr. Onsrud's case and reached out to our office recently seeking to review his case file. Upon retrieving this file from storage and inspecting its contents, it quickly became apparent that many documents were missing from such a very complex and serious case. Several prosecutors began immediately contacting the investigating agencies who assisted in the initial investigation. Over the course of several days, we were able to assemble a more complete case file.

In our review and research, it was and still is our belief that several material documents belonging to this investigation were not disclosed by the assigned prosecutor to the defense in 2007-2008. The prosecutor who handled the initial case is no longer with our office. I immediately contacted Mr. Onsrud's attorneys and informed them of this discovery and agreed to vacate the conviction to allow this case to be thoroughly investigated before any further action is taken. The State has also asked the Court to release Mr. Onsrud while the case remains pending.

Under the Illinois Rules of Professional Responsibility, the duty of a prosecutor "is to seek justice, not merely to convict." The State's Attorney's Office is the representative of all people, including the defendant, and it is our duty to safeguard the constitutional rights of everyone. This situation was clearly a miscarriage of justice that we could not let go ignored. At a time when our community is seeking transparency and justice, we stand by our commitment to maintain the highest ethical duties required of our profession and will not allow any violation of a defendant's rights.

In furtherance of this commitment, our office will be conducting an audit of all cases that were handled by this former prosecutor and will be asking our local elected officials to help this effort by assisting in the funding of a Criminal Integrity Unit within the Rock Island County State's Attorney's Office.

We extend our gratitude to all of our local investigating agencies who assisted us in obtaining quick and complete records, ASA Heidi Weller and ASA Kathy Swett for their many hours of work on this matter, and the Illinois' Innocence Project for their endless efforts on behalf of defendants who may be wrongfully imprisoned.

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